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DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL OF RURAL TOURISM (THE CASE OF “TEŠNJARSKE VEČERI” FESTIVAL)

Rural tourism is a very broad concept which includes not only holidays in the countryside a range of other tourist activities in rural areas, such as traditional festivals. Tourist festivals are devoted to different local products which are famous in rural parts of Serbia. Some of the most popular Serbian festivals are the Grape Festivals in Sremski Karlovci, Erdevik, Banoštor, Irig, Erdevik, Vršac, Župa, Palić, Aleksandrovac, Hajdukovo, Smederevo, Topola; Plum Days in Osečina and Koštunići; Cabbage Days in Futog, Barbeque in Leskovac; Bacon Days in Kačarevo; Ham Days in Mačkat; Golden Pot of Danube in Petrovaradin, Apatin; Mushroom Days in Fruška gora, Valjevo and Divčibare, Medical Herbs Days in Soko Banja; Bee Days in Zaječar. This paper deals with the development potential of rural areas associated with these festivals by analyzing the case of “Tešnjarske večeri”. This festival provides a diverse cultural and ethnographic entertaining program, combining visual and performing arts, and celebrates the vibrant life of the local community.

Keywords: rural tourism, festival, countryside, development, Tešnjarske večeri, Serbia

Introduction

According to Vujko et al. [1], rural tourism is an important factor of multifunctional rural development, which has been confirmed by numerous theoretical and empirical studies [2, 3]. Rural tourism in Serbia is a new phenomenon [1, 4]. Rural tourism, like other types of tourism, may have a significant environmental, economic, and social impact on local communities. According to Petrović et al. [4], the effect of rural tourism on attitudes and behavior of local residents has been addressed in several theoretical and research papers in the last ten years [5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12]. These studies prove that rural tourism might be an important element in the positive and negative changes in the local rural area and that it might heavily affect the local residents.

Rural tourism represents tourism in rural locations and “themed villages”, which also includes participation in various recreation and leisure activities, festivals, handicraft fairs, and so on. Therefore, rural tourism can be seen as a way of solving the problem of the declining profitability potential of the local agricultural industry and as a source of additional income for local enterprises.

According to Vujko et al. [1], rural tourism encompasses all tourism activities carried out in rural areas. Rural tourism has many forms, which include the following:

- Tourism in rural households,
- Hunting and fishing,
- Eco-tourism,
- sports and recreation,
- Residential tourism (holiday homes),
- Educational tourism,
- Gastronomic tourism, festivals and events,
- Cultural tourism.

Thus, we can identify the basic characteristics of rural tourism: first and foremost, it involves rural areas and provides people with an opportunity to be in close contact with nature and to learn about the cultural heritage, “traditional” societies and “traditional” practices. Rural tourism presents a complex of rural

environments, economies, histories and locations. Most of the revenue generated through rural tourism is used to support the local community and enrich their livelihood.

For our study we have chosen event “Tešnjarske večeri” (Tešnjars Evenings), held in the city of Valjevo in the old quarter Tešnjars, which is an architectural ambience that is particularly attractive for tourists. The organizers of this event are the Municipal Assembly of Valjevo and Cultural and Education Community of Valjevo. Tourist event “Tešnjarske večeri” has been held since 1987 and is a traditional event with a diverse cultural program. The Municipal Assembly describes “Evenings of Tešnjars” as a cultural festival with a diverse program including films, theatre and music performances, meetings of writers, publishers, and booksellers. The event is held at several locations: the three key locations are Tešnjars, summer stage of the Kolubara, and the plateau of the Centre for Culture. The survey research was done at these three locations as well as on the marble bridge over the summer stage of Kolubara, Kneza Miloša Street and Vojvoda Mišić Square.

Methodology

The basic method of our research is a sociological survey, which is a method typically used for studies in cultural geography and event tourism (direct observation and semi-structured interview with the organizers and participants of the festival). During the event of 2016, a survey was done on a random sample of 276 visitors. It was done during the six days of the event. This period was chosen because in these days the event is attended by the largest number of visitors. The survey was anonymous.

One of the methods of data analysis was Pearson's chi-square test, which is used to determine whether the obtained (observed) frequency (answers of respondents according to the gender and age structure) deviate from the expected frequencies. The test shows whether there is a connection between these two groups and the likelihood of this connection. We assumed that there would be no differences in responses according to the gender and age of our respondents. In order to detect any differences in the responses we are using a significance level of $p < 0.05$.

Result and Discussion

The survey (Table 1) included 126 men (45.7%) and 150 women (54.3%). Regarding the age structure of the visitors (Table 2), most of them (27.5%) were under 18; 22.8%, from 61 to 70; 1.8%, over 71 (1.8%); from 51 to 60, 7.2%; and from 31 to 40, 9.8%.

Table 1.

Gender of visitors			
Gender		Frequency	Valid Percentage
Valid	Male	126	45,7
	Female	150	54,3
	Total	276	100

In order to detect the differences in the responses, the results are shown depending on the gender and age structure of the participants and the statistically significant difference is taken at the level of $p < 0.05$.

Table 2.

Age of visitors			
Age		Frequency	Valid Percentage
Valid	Under 18	76	27.5
	19-30	43	15.6
	31-40	27	9.8
	41-50	42	15.2
	51-60	20	7.2

	61-70	63	22.8
	Over 71	5	1.8
	Total	276	100

Table 3 shows that the majority of visitors - 73 (26.4%) - spent one day at the event. 56 (20.3%) visitors were at the event for six days. Not surprisingly, the smallest number of visitors were those who spent at the event 7 days or more than 7 days – 4.3% and 3.6% respectively.

Table 3.

Number of days			
Days		Frequency	Valid Percentage
Valid	1	73	26.4
	2	43	15.6
	3	27	9.8
	4	38	13.8
	5	17	6.2
	6	56	20.3
	7	12	4.3
	More than 7 days	10	3.6
	Total	276	100

Table 4 illustrates that young people under the age of 18 mostly chose a one-day visit. Visitors from 19 to 30 usually spent two days. Visitors from 31 to 40 were there for three days. It is interesting that the smallest number of people attended the event for more than seven days, that is, they came to the festival every day.

Table 4.

Number of days according to age structure									
Number of days		Structure of visitors by age							Total
		Under 18	19-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	Over 71	
1	Count	73	0	0	0	0	0	0	73
	%	26.4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	26.4%
2	Count	0	43	0	0	0	0	0	43
	%	0%	15.6%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	15.6%
3	Count	0	0	27	0	0	0	0	27
	%	0%	0%	9.8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	9.8%
4	Count	0	0	0	38	0	0	0	38
	%	0%	0%	0%	13.8%	0%	0%	0%	13.8%
5	Count	0	0	0	0	17	0	0	17
	%	0%	0%	0%	0%	6.2%	0%	0%	6.2%
6	Count	0	0	0	0	0	56	0	56
	%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	20.3%	0%	20.3%
7	Count	0	0	0	0	1	6	5	12
	%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0.4%	2.2%	1.8%	4.3%
>7	Count	3	0	0	4	2	1	0	10
	%	1.1%	0%	0%	1.4%	0.7%	0.4%	0%	3.6%
Total	Count	76	43	27	42	20	63	5	276
	%	27.5%	15.6%	9.8%	15.2%	7.2%	22.8%	1.8%	100%

Table 5.

Pearson chi-square test			
	Value	df	Statistical significance (p)
Pearson chi-square test	1419.787	42	0.000

Interestingly, there were no statistically significant differences in the responses of the people of both genders and age structure $p = 0.000$ (Table 5).

As far as the gender is concerned, it should be noted that twice as many female respondents as men came on a one-day visit - 53 (19.2%). Table 4 demonstrates that these respondents were under the age of 18. Several female respondents came to visit for several days and 9 (3.3%) came to the festival every day.

Table 6.

Number of days according to gender				
Days		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
1	Count	20	53	73
	%	7.2%	19.2%	26.4%
2	Count	30	13	43
	%	10.9%	4.7%	15.6%
3	Count	10	17	27
	%	3.6%	6.2%	9.8%
4	Count	19	19	38
	%	6.9%	6.9%	13.8%
5	Count	10	7	17
	%	3.6%	2.5%	6.2%
6	Count	27	29	56
	%	9.8%	10.5%	20.3%
7	Count	9	3	12
	%	3.3%	1.1%	4.3%
More than 7 days	Count	1	9	10
	%	0.4%	3.3%	3.6%
Total	Count	126	150	276
	%	45.7%	54.3%	100%

Table 7.

Pearson chi-square test			
	Value	df	Statistical significance (p)
Pearson chi-square test	31.606	7	0.000

Interestingly enough, there were no statistically significant differences in the responses of the people of both genders and age structure $p = 0.000$ (Table 7).

The largest number of visitors (Table 8) found out about the event from the radio and television – these were 105 people (38.0%) or more than a third of all the visitors; 63 (22.8%) visitors were told by friends and family; 51 (18.5%), from the advertising materials (e.g. brochures and leaflets); 47 (17.0%), from the Internet. The conclusion is that visitors are well informed and actively use all the available sources of information.

Table 8.

Sources of information			
Information source		Frequency	Valid Percentage
Valid	Radio and TV	105	38,0
	Prospectus	51	18,5
	Family and friends	63	22,8
	Internet	47	17,0
	Other	10	3,6
	Total	276	100,0

By looking at Table 9, we can conclude that the younger population (under 18) mostly found about the festival from family and friends - 33 (12.0%). It can be assumed that it was their friends and relatives who recommended the respondents to participate. The majority of those who heard about the festival used radio and television programs. Most of these people were 61 to 71 years old - 54 respondents (19.6%). Two equal groups of people have found out about the event on the Internet: these are young people and those aged between 41 and 50, each of the groups consisting of 13 people or 4.7%.

Table 9.

Preferred sources of information according to the age structure									
Sources of information		Structure of visitors by age							Total
		Under 18	19-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	Over 71	
Radio and TV	Count	14	22	7	4	4	54	0	105
	%	5.1%	8.0%	2.5%	1.4%	1.4%	19.6%	0%	38.0%
Advertising materials	Count	16	5	16	13	1	0	0	51
	%	5.8%	1.8%	5.8%	4.7%	0.4%	0%	0%	18.5%
Family and friends	Count	33	13	4	12	1	0	0	63
	%	12.0%	4.7%	1.4%	4.3%	0.4%	0%	0%	22.8%
Internet	Count	13	3	0	13	9	4	5	47
	%	4.7%	1.1%	0%	4.7%	3.3%	1.4%	1.8%	17.0%
Other	Count	0	0	0	0	5	5	0	10
	%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1.8%	1.8%	0%	3.6%
Total	Count	76	43	27	42	20	63	5	276
	%	27.5%	15.6%	9.8%	15.2%	7.2%	22.8%	1.8%	100%

Interestingly, there were no statistically significant differences in the responses of people of both genders and age structure $p = 0.000$ (Table 10).

Table 10.

Pearson chi-square test			
	Value	df	Statistical significance (p)
Pearson chi-square test	220.472	24	0.000

Table 11.

Preferred sources of information according to the gender

Sources of information		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Radio and TV	Count	78	27	105
	%	28.3%	9.8%	38.0%
Advertising materials	Count	4	47	51
	%	1.4%	17.0%	18.5%
Family and friends	Count	20	43	63
	%	7.2%	15.6%	22.8%
Internet	Count	24	23	47
	%	8.7%	8.3%	17.0%
Other	Count	0	10	10
	%	0%	3.6%	3.6%
Total	Count	126	150	276
	%	45.7%	54.3%	100%

Table 11 shows that most men - 78 (28.3%) – found out about the festival on the radio and television. Most women received the information from advertising materials - 47 (17.0%). It is assumed that considerably more women than men read leaflets and brochures. A lot of women also heard about the event from their friends and relatives - 43 (15.6%). As for the Internet, both sexes were equally represented.

Table 12.

Pearson chi-square test

	Value	df	Statistical significance (p)
Pearson chi-square test	77.947	4	0.000

There were no statistically significant differences in the responses of people of both genders and age structure $p = 0.000$ (Table 12).

Conclusion

Serbia is a country with respect for traditional values, rich cultural heritage and pristine natural environment. Therefore, this country has a great potential for the development of rural tourism. There is a variety of rural areas in Serbia with different economic, socio-cultural and demographic characteristics. There are, however, a number of problems that impede efficient development of rural tourism: for example, the lack of knowledge about the new approaches to the development of rural economy; the lack of institutional framework (especially legislation) which would ensure the coordinating role of the state and greater involvement of local authorities into rural development; underdeveloped infrastructure; inadequate production and ownership structure; inadequate diversification of activities; and the dominance of the sectoral police [13, 14].

To be competitive on the market, rural destinations must meet the highest standards of quality to satisfy the needs of tourists and to ensure their loyalty. Tourists should be encouraged to return to these places again and again and to recommend them to their friends and relatives. This is particularly true of foreign tourists, who have already accumulated considerable travel experience and are seeking the highest quality of hospitality and tourism [15]. Customer loyalty is directly related to word-of-mouth communication but we should not underestimate other sources of information such as the media, good advertising materials, and the Internet.

Local authorities play the key role in developing the potential of rural areas. In the past, they mostly focused on construction or maintenance of the infrastructure facilities and the improvement of social and health care. Nowadays, they need to invest more funds and effort into the development of rural tourism,

organization of various rural festivals and the creation of institutions that would represent the interests of agricultural producers. The authorities should also provide sufficient support to local farmers, for example, through subsidies, educational schemes, awareness raising measures, facilitated administrative procedures, interest-free loans, and so on. All these activities are important for the development of rural tourism.

Rural tourism provides opportunities which can be used to devise a balanced local and regional strategy ensuring cooperation of a wide range of stakeholders. Effective partnerships between the public and the private sectors can serve as the basis for sustainable development. Innovations often come from the private sector, that is, from those who live and work in that area.

In order to turn "Tešnjarske večeri" into a large-scale tourist event, better marketing strategies are required. To make this event more economically profitable it is also recommended to provide a wider range of souvenirs for sale representing the traditional arts and crafts.

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